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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR - A/S FRIED AND DAS BRYZA

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TAGS: PREL PGOV TU CY EU UN

SUBJECT: TURKISH MFA PREPARING CYPRUS PROPOSAL FOR PRIME TIME

REF: A. ANKARA 7096

¶B. STATE 225096

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Turkish MFA Deputy U/S Apakan previewed with Ambassador December 27 the current MFA draft aimed at opening Turkish ports and airports to Greek Cypriots as part of a negotiable package that would make such a move feasible here. MFA is working this at the behest of FM Gul, who realizes the risk of an EU accession negotiation train wreck in 2006, absent movement on Cyprus. Ambassador urged the Turks to be realistic about what can be achieved, narrow their focus, frame the proposal specifically as a process aimed at helping Turkey fulfill its EU obligations, and recruit EU allies by better addressing EU concerns in other areas. This MFA draft is a further refinement of FM Gul's May 30 proposal for mutual opening of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot ports and airports. End summary.

¶2. (C) Apakan followed up the MFA's early December discussion on Cyprus with the embassy and Turkish Ambassador Logoglu's meeting with EUR A/S Fried (reftels). He emphasized that FM Gul realizes Turkey cannot "sit idle" on Cyprus lest it risk an EU accession negotiation train wreck, and previewed with Ambassador MFA's current working draft proposal on how to move forward on Cyprus. The goal, Apakan explained, is to open ports and airports both in Turkey and in the "TRNC" in order to fulfill Turkey's obligations to the EU on the Ankara Protocol extension, as well as the EU's "obligation" to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. The paradigm has changed, Apakan insisted; this is about pragmatic steps, not about recognition. Turkey is looking for ideas, Apakan stressed. The government realizes the focus must be on the opening of Turkish ports, which is why this is item number one in the draft. The paper itself is not intended as a "take it or leave it" proposition, he added; they are open to suggestions and changes. The draft, which Apakan showed us, tracks closely with what we have reported earlier. Main points include:

--opening of Turkish sea and airports to Greek Cypriot vessels and planes;

--opening of Turkish Cypriot ports, with monitoring by the IMO and others;

--opening of Turkish Cypriot airport, with monitoring by the ICAO and others;

--extension of Customs Union benefits to Turkish Cypriots;

--inclusion of Turkish Cypriots in international sporting and cultural events;

--all the above with no prejudice to parties' existing political positions (i.e., no recognition implied);

--UNSYG to arrange a March 2006 meeting of all parties (Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Turks, Greeks, with observers from EU Commission and "interested parties", i.e., U.S. and UK) to work out the arrangements;

--agreement on a comprehensive settlement by the end of 2006; and

--UNSYG-arranged mechanism to monitor implementation.

¶3. (C) Ambassador referred to A/S Fried's meeting with the Turkish ambassador, but said Washington had not yet provided guidance. Noting that he had no instructions from Washington, Ambassador offered the following personal comments. First, he saw three sets of elements at work: (1) The EU's requirements on Cyprus and how to work with them in a way that does not box Turkey in with respect to its accession negotiations; (2) the issue of a long term settlement and how best to position the parties for progress there; and (3) how Cyprus issues relate to other items in the EU accession process.

¶4. (C) For any Turkish effort on Cyprus to succeed, it needed to be realistic. A proposal that the Greek Cypriots could shred might leave Turkey worse off than it is now. The kind of proposal most likely to achieve results, Ambassador suggested, would be the shortest, simplest, and most narrowly focused. Turkey should carefully consider the need for extraneous or secondary elements, such as participation at sporting events or even the issue of a long term settlement,

which may not be critical for resolving the Customs Union/ports/airports problem. In addition, Ambassador noted that:

--To the extent the GOT feels obligated to refer to the UN, it might simply refer to the UN's role and obligations in connection with the Annan plan. Ambassador was skeptical the EU would agree to a UN role in mediating fulfillment of Customs Union obligations, but acknowledged this is up to the EU.

--If Turkey wants this to work, it must attract other EU allies, in addition to the UK, which often finds itself a lone voice, by making the package as attractive and reasonable as possible.

--Turkey may also want to consider calling its effort a process, rather than a plan, and one aimed more clearly at helping Turkey fulfill its obligations to the EU.

--The Cyprus issue is one of the toughest, if not the toughest, that Turkey will encounter during its accession negotiations. One way to gain allies is to move ahead as quickly as possible on other, perhaps easier issues. The terrible headlines of the past few weeks almost ensure, Ambassador stressed, that other EU members make no argument to the Greek Cypriots; they may cause EU members to give the Turkish proposal the thumbs down. The effect on the EU of the Pamuk trial and other freedom of expression cases is, he added, devastating. Turkey must show its EU friends that it is headed in the right direction and frame its case so that Cyprus can be managed in a practical way.

¶5. (C) Apakan responded that the intent of the paper is to launch a process and engender broad discussion, such as occurred with all parties prior to the 2004 referendum. The MFA will show the draft paper to UK Ambassador Westmacott and hopes to work closely with both the UK Embassy and us as this process moves forward. Apakan said it is still a work in progress; the Ambassador's comments were helpful, and

Turkey would welcome further U.S. thinking. FM Gul will speak to EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn and, in an effort to gather a group of like-minded countries, Turkey is in the process of contacting other EU partners to let them know that they are putting meat on the bones of Gul's May 30 proposal on Cyprus. Apakan was less optimistic on the notion of carving off the EU requirement of opening ports and airports from the UN settlement process. The EU, he said, "has no *acquis*" on Cyprus settlement and is uncomfortable dealing with Cyprus issues in the absence of the UN.

¶ 6. (C) While the EU has never fulfilled its commitment to end Turkish Cypriot isolation, Apakan acknowledged that the situation is a new one that called for new tools. If the EU considers Cyprus as an integral whole, it should not isolate the north. Ambassador committed to following up when he sees Ambassadorial colleagues in Washington, and provide further feedback.

¶ 7. (C) Comment: Although Turkish officials and public opinion always come back to the EU's failure to fulfill its 2004 promise to end Turkish Cypriot isolation, FM Gul and the MFA appear seized with the urgency of producing something positive and forward leaning on Cyprus that would allow Turkey to fulfill its obligations to the EU and avoid an accession negotiation train wreck, while giving them the domestic cover needed on northern Cyprus. It is not clear that Apakan really heard Ambassador's messages, but he had the DDG for Cyprus in the room, with whom we will follow up in the coming weeks.

WILSON